



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
801 North First Street, Room 400  
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number:  
P.C. 5/20/02      Item: P.C. – 3.i.

File Number:  
GP01-05-04

Council District and SNI Area:  
5 – N/A

Major Thoroughfares Map Number:  
68

Assessor's Parcel Number(s):  
481-07-039, -40, -041, 002, -003, -004

Project Manager: Deanna Chow

## GENERAL PLAN REPORT

### 2002 Spring Hearing

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from General Commercial to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC).

**LOCATION:** Northeast corner of Alum Rock Avenue and Jose Figueres Avenue

**ACREAGE:** 2.5

#### APPLICANT/OWNER:

Staff/ Various

#### GENERAL PLAN LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION DIAGRAM DESIGNATION:

Existing Designation: General Commercial with Neighborhood Business District Overlay

Proposed Designation: Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC)

**EXISTING ZONING DISTRICT(S):** CG – General Commercial & A(PD) – Agriculture (Planned Development)

#### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION(S):

North: Single-Family and Multi-Family Residential – Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

South: Senior Housing Complex – General Commercial & Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

East: Commercial/Retail uses – General Commercial

West: Industrial/Commercial uses – General Commercial

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:

Housing Opportunity Study General Plan Amendments Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pending

#### PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC)

Approved by:

Date:

#### PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

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**CITY COUNCIL ACTION:**

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**CITY DEPARTMENT AND PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

City of San Jose Parks and Recreation Commission – This amendment and GP01-05-03, GP01-05-04, and GP01-05-05 are within ¾ mile of one another. These projects together would generate the need for an accumulated 3.4 acres of dedicated parkland to serve new residents of these projects. It is recommended that Planning staff work closely with PRNS Parks Planning staff to find suitable parkland either on project sites or off site in close proximity to the project site to serve future residents of these sites.

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**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:**

See Public Outreach section

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**ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:****PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a staff-initiated General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from General Commercial to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) on a 2.5-acre site located at the northeast corner of Alum Rock Avenue and Jose Figueres Avenue. The City Council deferred this amendment from the 2001 Annual Review to allow for completion of an Environmental Impact Report. This amendment is one of five Housing Opportunity Study (HOS) Phase II amendments within the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Corridor. The existing General Commercial land use designation is a non-specialized commercial designation intended to permit a wide range of commercial uses. The proposed Transit-Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) land use designation permits wholly higher density residential projects or a mixed-use type development where neighborhood serving commercial can be provided on the first two floors and residential units above. Freestanding neighborhood commercial buildings are permitted where the development is well integrated into the project and they are located along a pedestrian pathway.

**BACKGROUND**

In January 2000, the City Council directed Planning staff to conduct the Housing Opportunity Study (HOS). The Housing Opportunity Study is modeled on the successful Housing Initiative Study that was completed for the Guadalupe Light Rail Transit Corridor in April 1991. The Housing Opportunity Study is a proactive approach to facilitate increased housing production, support transit with appropriate development intensities, and further the City's longstanding policy of infill development. The HOS seeks to identify specific vacant or underutilized parcels, particularly within or near the General Plan Transit-Oriented Development Corridors, which would be suitable for higher density or mixed-use development. These Corridors include the Guadalupe, Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street, Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue, Winchester Boulevard, Capitol Avenue/Expressway, and Vasona.

The HOS has three phases, with each phase evaluating different Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Corridors. The first phase, which focused on the Capitol Avenue/Expressway Corridor, was completed in

2001. Phase II is focused on the Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street and Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Corridors.

In 2001, the City Council approved an amendment to Urban Design Policy #10 which permits building heights up to 120 feet if within reasonable walking distance (approximately 2,000 feet) of an existing or planned passenger rail station. The specific locations of the light rail stations are in the planning stages for the Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Transit (DTEV LRT) which serves the Santa Clara/Alum Rock Corridor. When the station locations are finalized, development within approximately 2,000 feet of these LRT stations could have heights up to 120 feet. This is a maximum height, and at the time of a development application, actual building heights would be determined based on the surrounding land uses, compatibility, and other factors. Otherwise, the citywide height limit for residential and non-residential buildings is 50 feet.

### **Site and Surrounding Uses**

The 2.5-acre site is located on the northeast corner of Alum Rock and Jose Figueres Avenues. The site includes heavy equipment rental storage, dilapidated commercial buildings, and a vacant lot, half of which serves as a parking lot. The site is surrounded by developed properties, including commercial/industrial and multi-family residential uses to west, multi-family and a few single-family residential units to the north, a multi-family senior complex to the south, and commercial uses to the east. The area is typified in general by older commercial/industrial businesses such as auto-related shops and neighborhood serving “strip centers” with a nearby mix of residences.

The subject site is located within the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Corridor, one of six TOD Corridors identified in the City’s General Plan. The TOD Corridors are areas designated by the City as generally suitable for higher density residential, more intensive non-residential uses, and mixed-use development. These corridors are centered along existing or planned light rail transit lines and/or major bus routes. The Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue TOD Corridor includes a planned light rail line (Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project) that will link the Diridon Station west of Downtown to the Alum Rock Station on the Capitol Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. The planning of the Downtown/East Valley Light Rail Project is currently in the conceptual engineering and environmental review stages of the process. The project is anticipated to begin construction in 2004/2005 and be completed by 2007/2008.

The subject site is also located within the Alum Rock Neighborhood Business District (NBD). The NBD functions as an “overlay” designation that is applied to predominantly commercial land use designations in areas where there are strip commercial or “main street” areas that function in their neighborhoods or communities as a business district. The area provides a focal point and identity for the community. The Alum Rock Neighborhood Business District is a mix of commercial uses, predominantly commercial strip centers, but also “parking lots strips” where the parking is located in front of the building.





Looking east at a portion of the subject site along Alum Rock Avenue.

Looking at the interface between subject site and single-family residences located to the north along Jose Figueres

In February 2001, the City Council approved a Planned Development Zoning (PDC99-12-096) on a majority of the site for 66 affordable dwelling units, including 15 townhomes and 51 cluster residential units (stacked flats). The residential land use was found in conformance using a General Plan Discretionary Alternate Use Policy for 100% affordable housing. The density of the project is 24.6 dwelling units per acre and will be marketed to first time homebuyers. Additionally, a Planned Development Permit (PD01-12-121) was approved for development of the project, however construction has not begun. The proposed General Plan amendment does not affect the approved affordable housing project. However, should the project not come to fruition or future redevelopment of the remainder of the site was to occur, the proposed land use designation would allow for intensification. Planning staff is taking a proactive approach to development along the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue TOD Corridor and proposing a land use designation that would facilitate higher density or mixed use development without the need of a Discretionary Alternate Use Policy.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Land Use Compatibility/Policy Consistency**

The proposed amendment is compatible with the existing and planned land uses in the vicinity. The proposed change to the Land Use/Transportation Diagram from General Commercial to Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC) provides an opportunity to integrate uses and intensify land uses in appropriate locations. The proposed land use designation would facilitate future development that includes a component of ground floor retail that maintains a street presence as well as residential units at a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre. Higher density housing and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses fronting Alum Rock Avenue would be compatible with the existing and designated commercial and higher density residential land uses along Alum Rock Avenue. Site specific densities, design, and uses would be determined at the zoning stage based on compatibility with surrounding land uses and conformance with General Plan policies. Given the site's location within the TOD Corridor and NBD, the future development would need to conform to both the underlying land use and the overlay designations.

The proposed land use change within the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue TOD Corridor is consistent with several General Plan Major Strategies, including Growth Management, Housing and Sustainable City. These strategies support the increase of residential densities near rail stations, infill development and efficient use of resources. The proposed amendment is also consistent with several General Plan Goals and Policies which encourage higher density housing near light rail lines and other major transportation facilities. The Balanced Community Policy #2 supports the integration of housing with transportation systems and the Residential Land Use Policy #3 states that locations near light rail transit stations and along bus transit routes are preferable for higher density housing. The intensification of areas near access to transit allows for higher

density housing in appropriate urban locations, where city services and facilities are located, resulting in reduced sprawl and efficient use of resources.

The proposed Transit Corridor Residential land use designation would promote and enhance the Alum Rock Neighborhood Business District by creating an opportunity to revitalize the Alum Rock area with pedestrian-oriented and neighborhood serving commercial uses. It would also bring new residents to the area to benefit the existing businesses in the NBD. The change in land use would also provide an opportunity to reinforce/redevelop the “main street” character along the Alum Rock Corridor.

The Alum Rock Development Strategy, created in June 1999 by the Redevelopment Agency in conjunction with property owners, neighborhood groups, business associations and City staff, directly addressed the need to remove blight on Alum Rock between King Road and Jackson Avenue through comprehensive development and improvement. The Strategy identified several development recommendations, including creating a balance among residential and commercial uses. The Strategy also identifies site development recommendations. The subject site was marked as an area suitable for residential, commercial or mixed-use development. The proposed land use designation would be consistent with the goal of creating a balanced community and the land use identified in the Alum Rock Development Strategy.

## **Environmental Issues**

The Housing Opportunity Study Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR provides program level environmental review appropriate for the adoption of amendments to the San Jose 2020 General Plan. The EIR analyzed impacts and proposed mitigation measures, where possible, on the following items:

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Hazardous Materials
- Geology and Soil
- Hydrology
- Cultural Resources
- Biology
- Utilities
- Energy

The EIR identified several significant and unavoidable impacts, including transportation, air quality, and noise for just one of the sites along the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue Corridor (GP01-03-12). There are many General Plan Policies that can help mitigate the transportation impacts. However, should these sites develop prior to completion of the transit lines planned for the Santa Clara Street/Alum Rock Avenue and Stevens Creek Boulevard/West San Carlos Street TOD Corridors, the proposed land use changes would result in significant unavoidable long term traffic impacts. Air quality is considered a significant unavoidable impact because the project proposes additional residential units that are not reflected in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) regional Clean Air Plan. The inclusion of identified mitigation measures would reduce the impacts on regional air quality, but because the proposed General Plan amendments would add population not already reflected in the regional Clean Air Plan, the air quality impacts of their approval would still be considered a significant impact.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The property owners within the amendment site boundaries and/or property owners within a 1000-foot radius of the amendment site were sent a newsletter regarding the three community meetings that were held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> 2002. They also received a public hearing notice regarding the public hearings to be held on the subject amendment before the Planning Commission in May and City Council in June. In addition, the community can be kept informed about the status of amendments on the Department's web-site, which contains information on the General Plan process, each proposed amendment, staff reports, and hearing schedule.

During the community meetings, community members were concerned that there is already too much high density residential development in the area and that there are not adequate services such as parks and schools to support new residents. Other concerns included that the area is already inundated with traffic, and that San Jose needs more jobs and not more housing to achieve a jobs/housing balance.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends Transit Corridor Residential (20+ DU/AC).

### **Attachments**

PBCE002/GP\_Team/2002 Annual Review/Staff Reports/Spring Review/GP01-05-04.doc